

To whom it may concern,

HB 5283 I live in Woodbury, CT and have been so lucky to have had all four of my children go through the Agricultural Program at Nonnewaug High School. They had to apply to go as any other student, but I am not sure that they would have gone out of their way to apply had we not lived here. My oldest fought me on applying saying he wasn't a "hic". We did some research and visited the school and he saw that there was so much more to the program and applied. He learned so much from this program that he never thought he would be interested in. He made contacts, made new friends and really blossomed from a shy quiet kid to a confident, outgoing young man that really enjoyed and loved the outdoors. He then went on to college for horticulture and worked for a nursery/landscape company that does alot with helping the environment and land in our state. Including removing invasive plants, making rabbit habitats, and learning about our ecosystem, wetlands and how to attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife back into certain areas. This is all so important for our environment and more people need to be educated and learn about how to be more kind to our earth and care for it. My second son also graduated from this program and is now starting a business in landscaping, all from which he learned in the agricultural program. Both of my daughters are presently in the program. One will graduate next year and is looking into colleges for Environmental Science - she is interested in learning and possibly getting involved with environmental policy changes. She is also starting a garden club in the elementary school for her Girl Scout Gold Project, to educate the younger children about our program at the high school. My last child just started the program this year as a freshman. She has had a few tough years in middle school, especially with COVID. However she has really fallen in love with this program and is loving working with animals, learning about the environment, and learning how to be confident with public speaking and learning parliamentary procedures. I am excited to see where her interests take her.

The state funding for this program is vital. It is so important to give the students an opportunity to learn, teach them and others how important the program is, improve our environment and land in CT, to keep our agriculture sustainable and help our farmers to stay in business.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Christine Paige